

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional) President's Speech to the SES

DD/A Registry

FROM: Royal E. Elmendorf
D/Pers

EXTENSION

NO.

89-0341X

DATE 6 February 1989

TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

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Attached for your information is the text of the President's speech to members of the SES on 26 January 1989. While the speech does not deal with specific substantive issues, it is significant because President Bush selected the members of the SES to be the first group of government employees, aside from the White House staff, to receive a presidential address. President Bush mentions his drive for higher standards of conduct in government and the need for public employees to provide good service to the American people. I leave it to you as to whether or not you wish to disseminate the speech to your SIS officers.

Royal E. Elmendorf

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

January 26, 1989

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT
TO SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Constitution Hall

2:10 P.M. EST

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you so much. All right, here we go. Thank you so very much. Mr. Vice President -- thank you for that very warm welcome. Mr. Vice President and members of the Cabinet and designees and ladies and gentlemen. Let me first recognize especially the recipients of the Presidential Distinguished Rank Award who are with us here today.

And it's great to be here with all of you, the men and women whom I regard as certainly among America's finest. You're the first group that I am addressing as President outside the White House and you're one of the most important groups I will ever speak to.

And you know, I wanted to be fully briefed before I came so I asked one of my staff, "When does open season begin?" (Laughter.) And he says, "For you, sir, it begins as soon as the honeymoon ends." (Laughter.)

We're all wise in the ways of Washington, especially you who have served this country with such distinction. And we know there are ups and downs. But I must say, there is a nice feeling around today in the country. I think people, when a new president comes in, do root for him regardless of partisan politics. That comes up tomorrow. But for today, why, I think there's a good mood out there and I thank you for that welcome to me and to the members of my Cabinet and designees and others that are here with us on this platform. Pundits agree, regardless of party, that of all the candidates I had the best Form 171. (Laughter.) I -- but seriously -- (applause.)

But really what we do have in common is that each of us is here to serve the American people. Each of us is here because of a belief in public service as the highest and noblest calling. And each one of us, on our first day, took a solemn oath: We pledged to defend the Constitution of the United States, and that is exactly what we shall do.

And our mandate comes from the people, because, as Abraham Lincoln said, "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other's consent." And so now that the people have spoken I'm coming to you as President and offering my hand in partnership. I'm asking you to join me as full members of our team. I promise to lead and to listen; and I promise to serve beside you as we work together to carry out the will of the American people.

Our principles are clear -- that government service is a noble calling and a public trust. I learned that from my mom and dad at an early age, and I expect that that's where many of you learned it -- there or in school. There is no higher honor than to serve free men and women; no greater privilege than to labor in government beneath the Great Seal of the United States and the American flag.

And that's why this administration is dedicated to ethics in government and the need for honorable men and women to serve in

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positions of trust. Yesterday, I appointed a commission -- bipartisan commission, headed by Judge Wilkey and former Attorney General Griffith Bell, to develop ethics reform proposals which will include all branches of the federal government. The guiding principle will be simply to know right from wrong; to act in accordance with what is right and to avoid even the appearance of what is wrong. Our duty is to serve, and my strong conviction is that we must do it only for the right reasons, as you do, out of a sense of service and love of country. Government should be an opportunity for public service, not private gain.

And I want to make sure that public service is valued and respected because I want to encourage America's young to pursue careers in government. There is nothing more fulfilling than to serve your country and your fellow citizens and to do it well. And that's what our system of self-government depends on.

And I've not known a finer group of people than those that I have worked with in government. You're men and women of knowledge, ability, and an integrity. And I saw that in the CIA, I saw that when I was in China, I saw it at the United Nations. And for the last eight years I saw that in every department and agency of the United States government. And I saw that commitment to excellence in the federal workers I came to know and respect in Washington, all across America, and indeed around the world. You work hard, you sacrifice, you deserve to be recognized, rewarded, and certainly appreciated. I pledge to try to make federal jobs more challenging, more satisfying, and more fulfilling. I'm dedicated to making the system work and making it work better.

Starting eight years ago I led a task force to remove unnecessary regulation of the private sector, to free up the energies of the American people. But I think we also need to continue to remove unnecessary and counterproductive regulation of federal workers and senior executives. I believe that there is tremendous pent-up energy in the federal government, a powerful force for good, that needs to be released, and I want to be the President to do that, to release the federal manager from bureaucratic bondage so that together we can, as I said on the steps of the Capitol, use power to serve people.

I think Connie Horner has done an outstanding job at OPM, at the Office of Personnel Management. And I'm delighted that my new Director of OPM will be Connie Newman. She is an outstanding executive. I have great confidence in her, and I think she's learned a few things on her way up since 1962. That's the year she began in federal service as a clerk-typist at the Department of the Interior. And just as the award winners here today represent the best and brightest, I think in choosing Connie I found one of the best and brightest, as well.

Now, as the Cabinet secretaries staff their agencies, particularly the senior position, they'll be looking for ability, for people committed to fulfilling the mandate we received from the American people and to doing it with excellence. And if we find that the best choice for an appointment is a career government executive, I am for that and I hope that my selection of Tom Pickering to be our Ambassador at the United Nations is underlining that point.

I have a conservative vision of government; I ran and was elected on those terms. And I see no strain or tension between those values and the values of a professional civil service whose highest principle is one of patriotism, whose foremost commitment is to excellence, whose experience and expertise is in itself a national resource to be used and respected. I urge all my appointees to build a spirit of teamwork between the political and career officials.

And each of you has a special role to play here. You've reached the top of your profession and you're skilled managers, knowledgeable in your fields, respected by your colleagues. And I'm

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asking you to join with our political appointees not only in setting an example of cooperation but, again, one of excellence as well.

To those who work outside Washington, I would send a special message. At times it may be frustrating when it seems that the head office is thousands of miles away and the message is not getting through. But if I may, I'm going to issue a verbal executive order: We're going to listen. Because the heart of our government is not here in Washington; it's in every county office, every town, every city across this land. Wherever the people of America are, that's where the heart of our government is.

And since, in any organization, so many of the best ideas come from the bottom up, I hope the people in this room will listen, listen closely to the people who work for you. The civil servants on the front lines know what works because they're right there. Whether they're working with disadvantaged children, promoting American exports, or managing our public lands, they are in touch with the American people.

And there's much we need to accomplish for America. There is a mandate to fulfill. And there are problems to solve. We have work to do in promoting education, protecting the environment, and certainly in fighting crime. We have work to do in our cities and on our farms, and we have a war on drugs to win. We must provide for the common defense, strive for a lasting peace, and we must keep our economy growing so it can keep producing jobs and opportunity. Above all, we have a compact with the American people; they pay for excellent government and they deserve to receive it. And together we can assure that that is done.

And there's one more thing we need to do. The government is here to serve, but it cannot replace individual service. And shouldn't all of us who are public servants also set an example of service as private citizens? So I want to ask all of you -- and all the appointees in this administration -- to do what so many of you already do -- to reach out and lend a hand.

Ours should be a nation characterized by conspicuous compassion, generosity that is overflowing and abundant. And you can help make this happen outside of your workplace, in your communities and your neighborhoods, in any of the unlimited opportunities for voluntary service and charity where your help is so greatly needed.

Well, I'm honored to be with you, to work with you -- you here in Washington, your colleagues in the federal service around the nation. They're some of the most unsung heroes in America. The United States is the greatest nation in the world because we fulfill that mission of greatness one person at a time, as individuals dedicated to serving our country.

And as we embark on this great new chapter in our nation's history, I want to tell you, came over here to tell you that I am proud of you and very glad that we will be working to write this chapter together.

Thank you all and God bless you in your important work. Thank you very, very much. (Applause.)

END

2:23 P.M. EST